

Fisheries Information System National Meeting Summary

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Science and Technology hosted a four-day nationwide Fisheries Information System (FIS) meeting in Silver Spring during the week of November 18, 2003. About 60 people representing NOAA Fisheries' regions and centers, Marine Fisheries Commissions, and various states gathered for this first national event. This meeting was very successful in bringing together the talents and expertise of the principal stakeholders.

The goals of the meeting were to discuss and concur on FIS vision and goals, share and promote best information management practices, and kick off Professional Specialty Groups (PSGs) – the key work groups implementing components of FIS. The meeting sustained a high level of energy and concluded with a commitment to continue to work together to further develop and pursue specific objectives to achieve FIS goals.

The NMFS Director of Scientific programs Mike Sissenwine open the meeting with his welcome remarks, and the NMFS Chief Information Officer (CIO) Larry Tyminski followed with his opening address. Meeting conveners from the Office of Science and Technology – Dave Van Voorhees, Division Chief, Fisheries Statistics and Economics; Tina Chang, FIS project manager; John Hoey (now with NEFSC Woods Hole); and Steven Koplin presented overviews of FIS, FIS progress, and next steps.

The FY 1998 Senate Mark established the **FIS mission**:

To create an umbrella program that coordinates techniques to gather and disseminate data nationally while accounting for the unique characteristics of regional commercial and recreational fisheries.

The **FIS vision**: The national FIS team works collaboratively to build a quality data management system to provide accurate, efficient and timely resources and services supporting fisheries data analysis and decision processes. The goals are published on the FIS website at: <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/fis/meetings/nov2003/index.html>

The meeting consisted of two parts: Best practices sharing and Professional Specialty Group initiative. Presenters from Regions, Science Centers, and Fisheries Information Networks shared ideas that they are pursuing or have already implemented to improve data collection, data quality, metadata, and information sharing and accessibility by applying better business practices and information technology solutions. Those presentations are available on the FIS website at the above link. All attendees actively participated in the meeting. Brainstorm sessions were conducted for many FIS topics and issues. Benefits of the system were presented and discussed during the meetings. Benefits include:

National level:

- Better information for national fisheries management decisions
- Leveraging of limited resources to deliver more timely and appropriate data
- Reduced data handling and duplicative system development

- Increased access to relevant data for all clients
- Enhanced communication and professional credibility

Regional level:

- Better information for regional and cross-regional fisheries management decisions
- Reduced effort to respond to national requests for summarized data
- Greater compatibility of information supporting daily business operations
- Assistance from other regions and headquarters on information technology application development, data conversion and metadata guidelines-

Professional Specialty Groups (PSGs) have been formed to address specific areas of interest. The PSGs worked to identify objectives, priorities, and success factors for each group under the umbrella of the FIS goals. Each PSG assigned action items and made arrangements for follow-up meetings to further refine their work plans. The PSGs established at the meeting include:

- FIS System Design and Integration – co-chaired by Tina Chang (ST) and Joan Palmer (NEFSC)
- Permits and Unique Identification – co-chaired by Steven Koplin (ST) and John Bishop (NWRO)
- Landings and Logbook Reconciliation – co-chaired by John Poffenberger (SEFSC) and Jan Pappas (PIFSC)
- Electronic Reporting – co-chaired by Doug Turnbull (ST) and Roland Tanner (NERO)
- *FIS Economic group** – co-chaired by Rita Curtis (ST) and Stephen Freeze (NWFSC)

* Note: this PSG will be formed after the November's meeting.

During the meeting, the PSGs identified 35 objectives with some of them focused on FY04. The summarized information for the FIS objectives is attached to this document.

In both meeting entrance and exit surveys, the majority of participants commented that FIS is very important to achieving regional and national NMFS goals and objectives.

This meeting provided an excellent starting point for the FIS effort and a fresh new approach to this national program. The FIS program provides an excellent opportunity for all regional and center offices to improve data management process and set up comprehensive policies and procedures for data collection, data processing, and reporting activities. The development of FIS will ensure our success in meeting our congressional mandates and provide better services to support the fishery data analysis and decision support processes.

In January, the PSG co-chairs will begin a regular series of teleconferences to share work plans and progress and to keep moving FIS forward. PSGs will continue their work to keep the FIS initiative moving forward.